

Mouth, head and neck cancers

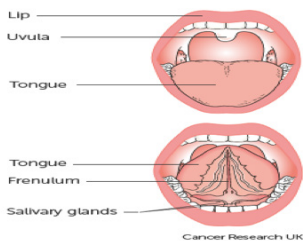
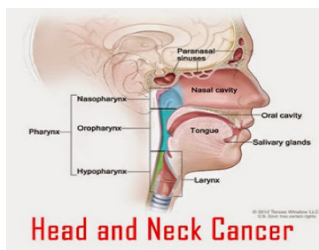
the facts

- **Over 700 cases of Mouth, Head and Neck Cancers (MHNC) are diagnosed every year in Ireland**
- **Men have double the risk of getting a mouth, head or neck cancer compared to women**
- **These cancers aren't common and they are some of the most preventable**
- **There are 17 types of MHNCs, including cancers that affect the mouth, throat, pharynx, larynx, salivary glands, middle ear and nasal sinuses**

What is mouth, head and neck cancer?

MHNC is cancer found in the tissues of the mouth, head and neck. There are several cancers, which are grouped together as MHNCs:

- Mouth Cancer – lips, tongue, gums, cheeks, roof of mouth & floor of mouth
- Oropharyngeal Cancer – back and side walls of the throat & the base of the tongue
- Nose Cancer – nasopharynx (the area where the throat joins the nose), nostrils or the lining of the nose
- Ear Cancer – There are three parts to the ear: the outer, middle or inner ear. Cancer can affect all of these parts but ear cancer is rare
- Eye Cancer - The most common type of eye cancer is melanoma. Other types of cancer affect different kinds of cells in the eye.
- Salivary gland cancer is a very rare cancer (salivary glands are located under the tongue, under each side of the jaw bone and under the ear lobes)
- Laryngeal (larynx, also known as voice box). This cancer is not as common
- Thyroid Cancer. This cancer is also quite rare. The thyroid is located at the base of the neck, just behind the small hollow where the collar bones meet
- Cancer can also develop in the bones around the face or in sinuses



Risk factors for Mouth, Head and Neck Cancers

- Smoking cigarettes, cigars, pipes or marijuana
- Chewing smokeless tobacco, such as betel quid (gutkha) or paan
- Drinking alcohol. You can avoid most head and neck cancers by not smoking and reducing your alcohol use
- Exposure to the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) can be a risk factor for tonsil and throat cancer
- Over exposure to the sun and sun beds is a risk factor for lip cancer

Signs and symptoms of mouth, head and neck cancer

The symptoms depend on where the cancer is in the mouth, head or neck. Symptoms can include:

- A sore or ulcer in the mouth that does not heal
- Discomfort or pain in the mouth that doesn't go away
- White or red patch inside the mouth that doesn't go away
- A lump in the mouth, face or neck area
- Thickening or hardening of the cheek or tongue
- Difficulty or pain with chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the tongue
- Numbness of the tongue or face
- Persistent sore throat or hoarseness
- Bleeding in the mouth or nose
- Unexplained loose teeth for no obvious reason or badly fitting dentures
- Unexplained weight loss over a short time
- Bad breath (halitosis)
- A blocked nose that doesn't get better
- Earache, changes in hearing or ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- Drooping on one side of the face (facial palsy)

Check your mouth regularly. If you have any of these symptoms for more than 3 weeks have them checked out by your G.P. or your dentist.

Reducing your risk of Mouth, Head and Neck Cancers:

- Do not smoke. If you do smoke, plan to quit. (Free text QUIT to 50100)
- Limit your alcohol consumption, less is best and none is better
- Always use a lip balm and face cream which provides UVA and UVB sun protection (SPF 30+)
- Do not use sunbeds and avoid extended periods of time in the sun
- Eat a healthy diet high in fruit and vegetables
- Check your mouth regularly for changes, for example, when brushing your teeth
- Attend your dentist regularly for a check-up, even if you have no teeth and wear dentures
- HPV Vaccine (for school children - this will reduce their risk as adults)

Be mouth aware with these 6 simple steps:

(Recreated with the permission of Dublin Dental University Hospital - DDUH)

Stand in front of a mirror with a good light and look inside your mouth for any new changes. Gently feel all round your mouth

- 1. Check your gums and inside the bottom and top lips**
- 2. Check inside the cheeks – right and left sides**
- 3. Open your mouth wide. Look at the roof of your mouth and the tonsils at the back of your mouth**
- 4. Stick out your tongue and check it: top, bottom and both sides (use a tissue to hold slippery tip)**
- 5. Lift your tongue and use your fingers to feel the floor of your mouth underneath and at each side of the tongue**
- 6. Check your lips, and finally, feel your neck for recent changes**

How are Mouth, Head and Neck Cancers diagnosed?

If you have any symptoms which have been there for more than 3 weeks visit your G.P. or dentist. Your G.P. or dentist will examine you and if necessary refer you to hospital for further investigations. You may also be referred to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist or other specialist such as an oral maxillofacial surgeon. Your G.P. or dentist will decide which specialist you should be referred to. You may require one of the following procedures:

- An ultrasound scan of the neck- This quick and painless test uses soundwaves to produce a picture of your neck and lymph nodes on a screen.
- A nasendoscopy – This is a test to look at the inside of the nose, the throat (pharynx) and the voice box (larynx). This procedure is done under local anaesthetic.
- Examination Under Anaesthetic (EUA) – This is where a thin tube is passed down the throat to examine it and to take a biopsy. This is done under general anaesthetic.
- A biopsy – a sample of cells or tissue which are then sent to a lab to be analysed.

Other types of tests used in diagnosing MHN cancers include X-rays, CT scans, MRI scans, and PET scans. These tests are primarily done to stage the cancer. Stage means how big the cancer is, and whether it has spread to another part of the body. There is more information about these tests on our website: www.mariekeating.ie

Treatment for Mouth, Head and Neck cancers

Your treatment depends on where in your mouth, head or neck your cancer is, how big it is, whether it has spread to anywhere else in your body and your general health. You might have one type of treatment or a combination of treatments. Surgery is a common treatment for early stage MHN cancers. The main treatments are:

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy
- Chemotherapy with radiotherapy (Chemoradiotherapy)
- Targeted therapies (Targeted therapies are used to stimulate the immune system or control the growth of cancer cells. Some seek out and destroy cancer cells. Others help the body's immune system to attack the cancer).

About the Marie Keating Foundation

Following our Mother's death in 1998 from breast cancer, we wanted to ensure men and women in every community in Ireland had access to the necessary information to prevent cancer or detect it at its earliest stages. So we set up the Marie Keating Foundation with a central mission to make cancer less frightening by enlightening.

Through its community information service, the Foundation's dedicated nurses have enlightened thousands of people of the causes and risk factors of all cancers. The Foundation is continuing to expand its awareness campaigns on each of the common cancers, at local level through its community outreach approach as well as through national campaigns.

The Foundation supports families with a loved one going through cancer treatment who are struggling financially with a once off payment, through its Comfort Fund. Support is also provided for men and women across Ireland who have come through cancer treatment and are adjusting to the 'new normal' with free six week Survive & Thrive programmes. For anyone who needs ongoing support as a result of a metastatic cancer diagnosis, the Foundation also holds monthly Positive Living meetings.

At the time of her death and all through her illness, we could do nothing to help our Mother who had, all our lives, done everything for us. We, the Keating family have set up this charity in her name to try to help and prevent others going through what Mam went through and what we are still going through to this day. This is also to show that such a wonderful mother and person did not die in vain.

Take care,

The Keating Family



Marie Keating
FOUNDATION

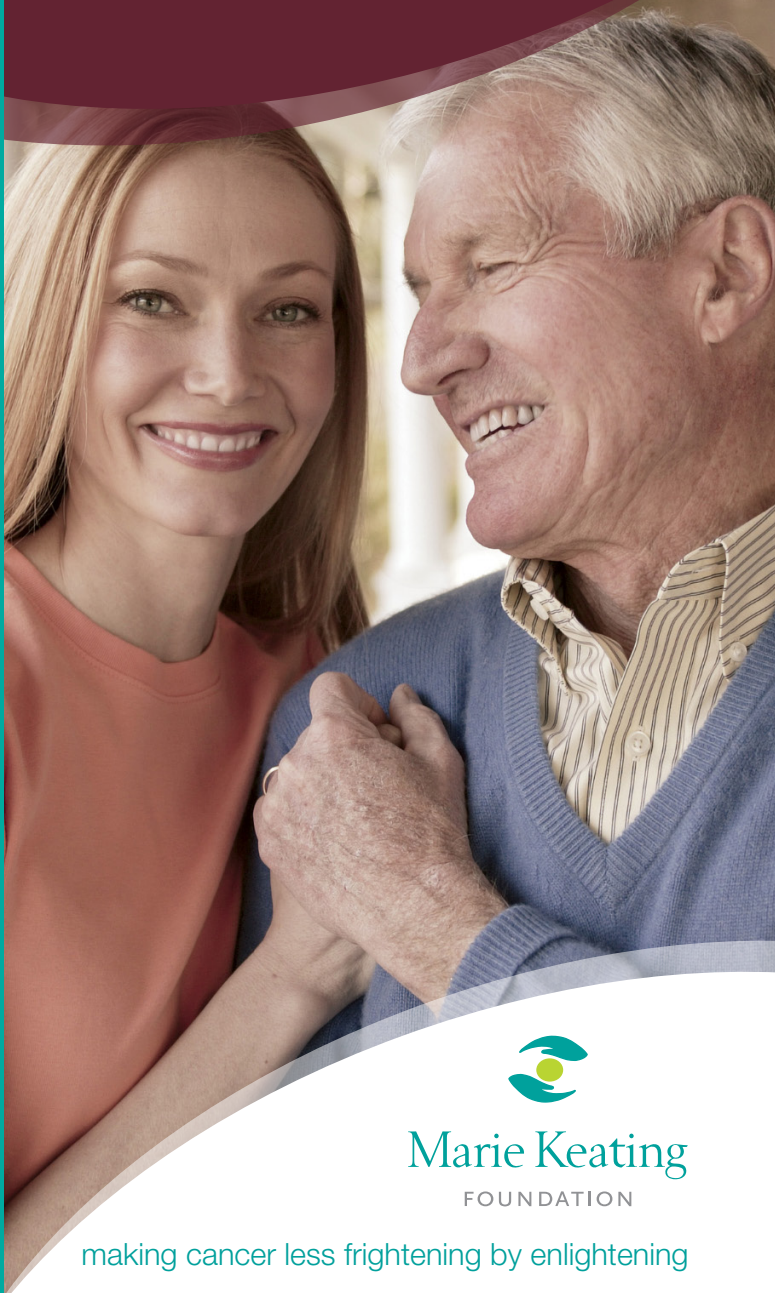
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Mouth, Head and Neck cancer in Ireland

What you should know



Marie Keating

FOUNDATION

making cancer less frightening by enlightening